DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 446 HE 020 942

AUTHOR Scott, Robert A.
TITLE The President's Advisory Council: A Seminar for College CEOs.
PUB DATE 3 Mar 87
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; *Advisory Committees; Business; *College Administration; *College Planning; *College Presidents; Higher Education; Innovation; *Leadership
IDENTIFIERS *Ramapo College of New Jersey

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the President's Advisory Council at Ramapo College of New Jersey is discussed by the college's president. The Council consists of a small group of experienced executives who discuss with the president strategic issues inherent in managing a sizeable enterprise. The four members of the Council are a marketing expert, a strategic planner, a financial analyst, and a quantitatively-oriented senior executive. The Council meets quarterly, reviews materials sent in advance, and advises the president on how to approach the issues. Issues presented to the Council concerned the college's financial plans and budget and the college's land holdings and opportunities for turning land into sources of revenue without selling the land and without committing it for undesirable purposes. Future topics will include the uses of technology and marketing. The President's Advisory Council is a way to borrow a model from industry to assist the college in implementing its plan. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED288446

The President's Advisory Council: A Seminar for College CEOs

by Robert A. Scott, President

Ramapo College of New Jersey

I have two great boards, a Board of Trustees of nine dedicated individuals appointed by New Jersey's Governor, and a Board of Governors of the Ramapo College Foundation, a group representing our principal corporate donors. The responsibility of the first Board is governance: selection and review of the president, financial condition, enrollment, personnel matters, legal issues, academic programs, and facilities, are the main topics on their agenda. There is little time, however, even during their 55 meetings a year (counting both committee and full board meetings) to think strategically. No matter how hard we try, there always seems to be some new issue for which the Trustees are responsible that demands detailed attention and lots of time. The Board of Governors of the Foundation meets less frequently, but is devoted exclusively to fundraising, a full-time occupation.

Both Boards are excellent and improving as we improve the quality of the information we provide them and clarify the issues before them. Nevertheless, this president felt the need for a small group of experienced executives with whom he could discuss the larger strategic issues inherent in managing a sizeable enterprise.

March 3, 1987

HE 020 942

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert H. Scott

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

To some business groups I have said, "Leave aside your notions of college and the ivory tower. Think of Ramapo as a 340-acre development with 500 employees, 16 hotels, 2 restaurants, a department store, 23 boutiques, a highway system, and a police force, with 4000 or more visitors daily, and an economic impact of about $75 million per year." The response to this description is always one of surprise. My question to myself was, what kind of advice does the chief executive officer of such an enterprise require?

For several years, I was an active consultant with the Curtis Publishing Co. and helped develop the business of writing corporate histories. While working with Sam Johnson of Johnson Wax on a company history, I learned how he used consultants. He has an ongoing relationship with a major consulting firm, and he brings in a team of consultants routinely to discuss major issues and to gain an outside perspective from those with the experience and technical expertise to supplement his thinking. I knew I could not afford this kind of assistance, but wondered if I might find a team of corporate leaders who would meet with me quarterly to engage in a lunchtime seminar on strategic planning. Such a "seminar" could help me improve the quality of thinking I was able to apply to my college responsibilities and help me formulate strategies for my board.

I had already met a number of corporate leaders, and there were already several people on the Board of Governors of the Foundation who were interested in assisting me more actively and in more ways than simply raising money. One of them was a marketing genius who has been exceptionally successful in retail sales. He had already suggested more ideas than I could implement in a lifetime,

and I was always stimulated by his thinking. I sought him out for ideas about how to position and market the college.

Another member of the Board of Governors, also desirous of helping in more ways than he had been called upon to do, was vice president of strategic planning for a billion dollar pe year firm also related to the retail field. He had been instrumental in capital planning as well as in general management for his firm.

I decided that I needed a CPA who specialized in small to medium-sized firms, and remembered a person I had met who was interested in becoming a member of our accounting advisory board. I then decided that with a marketing expert, a strategic planner, and a financial analyst, I needed a quantitatively oriented, hard-nosed senior executive who would pull no punches. And I thought of the person. The president of a large publishing firm had, for reasons I am still not certain of, provided more comments on my institutional strategic plan than had any other individual. His comments were cogent, creative, stimulating, and challenging. In addition to his professional responsibilities, he is on the board of one of the largest banks in New Jersey and serves on the board of two private preparatory schools.

I decided to ask these four people to comprise a President's Advisory Council which would meet quarterly, review materials sent to them in advance, and advise me on how to approach the issues.

The first set of issues I presented to the group concerned our financial plans

and budget. Their ideas about how to approach questions of revenue, costs, and controls were very helpful. I became better informed and better able to develop and present my budget and enrollment plans to my board of Trustees.

The second set of topics presented to the Advisory Council concerned our land holdings and several opportunities we have for turning land into sources of revenue without selling the land and without committing it for undesirable purposes. My discussions with the group about a strategic capital resource and project plan will result in a sophisticated and helpful capital plan which will assist the college in its presentations to the State Board of Higher Education and will carry the imprint of a distinguished panel of lay leaders.

Future topics will include the uses of technology, marketing, and other major areas of operation.

At first, several Trustees expressed concern about the role of the Council. The concern was that the Council would take on basic Trustee responsibilities and preempt the authority of the Board. Others wondered why I would want yet another group to work with. Fortunately, such concerns have subsided now that people can see the benefits of this quarterly president's seminar on strategic issues.

I have long believed that colleges can learn a great deal from corporations. Colleges tend to try to do everything on their own. The equivalent circumstance in industry occurs when a company tries to do everything from research to development to manufacturing to marketing to servicing. This is a very ambitious set of objectives which many institutions simply are not equipped to manage.

Even in industry, today, we see a greater willingness to enter into joint ventures and licensing agreements in order to expand the ability and capacity to succeed. Colleges must do the same. They must enter into partnerships with schools, colleges, and corporations; the sum of these efforts can be greater than the total of the individual activities. (See "Corporate Metaphors for College Growth," Robert A. Scott, The New York Times, December 15, 1985, p. E15.) This President's Advisory Council is but one way to borrow a model from industry to assist a college in the implementation of its plan.

rs/